

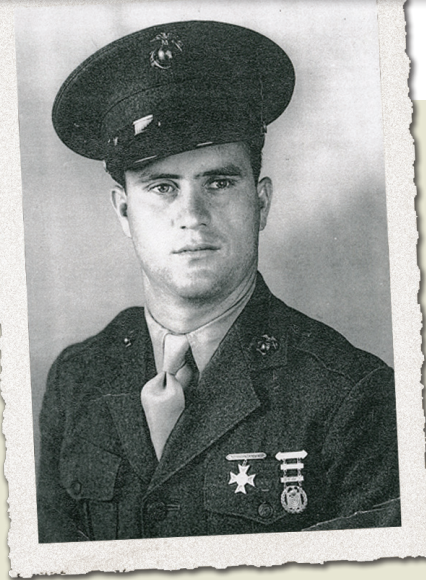
# VOICES *of* VETERANS

TEXAS VETERANS LAND BOARD

Summer 2012



## Veteran Spotlight



*Clovis Thompson*

The Battle of Okinawa was the largest amphibious operation in the Pacific Theater of WWII and resulted in the deaths of over 95,000 Japanese and 12,513 Americans during its bloody and intense 82 days of fighting. For two Texas veterans, their time fighting together on the island as U.S. Marines remains a defining moment of their lives and has created a strong bond that remains over 66 years later. Clovis

Thompson and Chester Brown recently shared their memories with the Voices of Veterans oral history program.

Clovis Thompson, a native of Paducah, Texas, served as a corporal in the Marine Corps infantry –

“I had lost three lieutenants during this period of time from one hill to the other, but as luck would have it I was still alive, but I had lost three lieutenants. So they brought in a lieutenant named Chester D. Brown. We moved up on this hill ... and then right there in front of us all of a sudden we saw a puff of smoke come out of the ground. We knew what it was. We knew it was a mortar coming out of there, and of course they knew where we were because we were pushing them back. Those mortars come down and they'd holler that Tommy's hit, John's dead, Ed Dunnin is dead, and so I said they're going kill us all if we don't do something ... I said get the machine guns up here. So he (Lt. Brown) called back and got a couple of machine guns up there, and they would give cover and I told them I'll go down there and get a good aim in there and see if I can knock that out. And of course Lt. Brown says you're out of your ever-loving mind. You can't live to go down there and back. Well, we got to do something. We can't just lay here and let them put those shells right in our laps. So we decided we'd do that and we got those machine guns up there and opened them up and as best they could to give me protection. I went down across the opening, and when I got down there, I found a hole in the

### My Fellow Veterans:

Five generations of my family have served in times of war. As a former Marine and Vietnam veteran, I know every veteran has a story to tell. The Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans™ program wants to preserve as many of these important oral histories as possible. Through these stories of bravery, fear and fellowship, future generations of Texans can learn lessons not found in any textbook—like what it means to sacrifice for a cause greater than yourself, and how to face adversity against great odds. Free to any Texas veteran, the Voices of Veterans™ program provides a lasting legacy for historians, friends and family members, and helps us to honor and remember the sacrifices of all Texas veterans.



Semper Fi,

*Jerry*  
JERRY PATTERSON,  
Chairman  
Texas Veterans  
Land Board

VOICESOFVETERANS.ORG ★ 1.800.252.VETS



## WHY ORAL HISTORY?



**N**othing is more powerful than the spoken word. Imagine if we could listen to the stories of heroes such as David Crockett, Sam Houston, and Stephen F. Austin in their own words.

Thanks to digital technology, we can now record the special memories of today's heroes and share them with future generations of Texans.

**"The Voices of Veterans program serves as a living monument to honor the sacrifices of all veterans."**

Military history often highlights stories of major battles, equipment or famous leaders. Yet, the stories of

the men and women on the frontlines are often overlooked. Stories of courage, fear, fellowship and inspiration are lost with every passing year.

The Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans program wants to record these stories to remind future Texans that ordinary men and women, when faced with adversity, can accomplish extraordinary things. The Voices of Veterans program serves as a living monument to honor the sacrifices of all veterans.

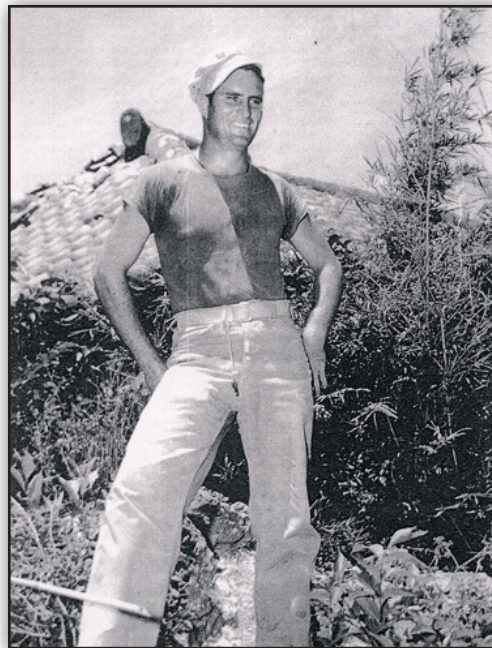
ground, and that's all it was—a hole in the ground about 3 or 4 feet deep, about 3, 4 or 5 feet in circumference, and there was nothing there. But we knew good and well that's where that smoke was coming from. So as I got down there, I threw a grenade in there, and I come back. And in a few minutes here come the mortars again. So I told Chester (Lt. Brown), I said OK, holler at the demolition man and get me three sticks of dynamite with a 5-second fuse on it. Of course

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**Tommy's hit, John's dead, Ed Dunnin is dead, and so I said they're going kill us all if we don't do something ... I said get the machine guns up here.**

—Clovis Thompson

”



**Thompson on Okinawa.**

they looked at me and said what in the world do you think you're going to do with that? I said well, I'm going to try to get up in his lap and I don't want it back in my lap, either. So that's what he did. He fixed me up with a dynamite charge with a fuse on it, lit it, and I took off down there and threw it in the hole, and pretty close to the time I threw that in the hole, of course it went off, and we had, I use the word landslide, all those hills (had) caves, and with this dynamite charge it caved in several areas, a pretty big area ... As I was trying to get back to my position

you never saw two little old legs run so hard in your life trying to get up that hill and get out of that area. Anyhow, I did knock out the enemy and that's what I got a Silver Star for."

Chester Brown was a recent graduate of the University of Texas and a new Marine 2nd Lt. during the battle. He nominated Clovis Thompson for the Silver Star –

"They called me up at the regiment and said Brown, we want you to make the landing with the 22nd Regiment as liaison officer. I said yes sir, and didn't know what a liaison officer did. I assumed you set up some kind of liaison. Anyway, I was with the 22nd on the landing, not my own people. About the third day I went across the peninsula and joined the 4th Marines ... And then I was given a platoon in Company A and we were the replacement platoon ... I never knew when Clovis joined it. That sounds strange, but you know, you





*Thompson and pals on Guadalcanal.*

hear a man get hit behind you, and you hear about a replacement, and you got a name, and he's filled the bill. That's the man they gave you, that's the one you use. I heard that Texas twang ... We were on a ridge and didn't know it, but it links with a cave underneath, and we began to get casualties from mortar fire, and we finally located the hole that was evidently an air vent to the troops underneath, and we called for an explosive bigger than a grenade, and they brought it up and the guy said you're going to have to have a lot of endurance to take this. (His name is) Clovis, (but) I called him Blackie, it was his nickname ... he didn't hesitate. He said I'll take it. Handed his rifle to somebody else and took the thing and ran down the hill. I'm going to say about 20 yards under rifle fire and poked that thing in the hole and came back about five steps and fell down flat. It went off and we never got another mortar round out of that hole. We didn't think about awards ... (but) I was fully aware of the bravery that he took on himself, exposing himself to enemy fire to save us, the rest of the troops."



*Chester and Daisy Brown*

## How It Works

1

### Complete and mail the screening form at the end of this newsletter.

Let us know you're ready to tell your story.

2

### Introduction by phone.

When we get your contact info, our staff will call to chat about your story. This helps us organize our work and lets us know more about you.

3

### Set an interview date.

Once approved, the staff will work with you and our volunteer interviewer to pick the best day for your interview.

4

### Tell your story.

Either by phone or in person, a typical Voices of Veterans interview lasts 1 to 2 hours.

5

### Add pictures if you want.

Please feel free to send us copies of wartime photos, documents or other memorabilia to enrich your story.

6

### Proof your interview.

You will have a chance to review and edit the transcript of your interview for accuracy. We want to get it right.

7

### Get your story on CD.

You will receive a free transcript and 4 free audio CDs of your interview, along with a frameable certificate.



*"... their favorite trick was, if you refused to answer, you got two options. One, they would take out their Luger, put it on the desk and say we have ways to make you answer ..."*

**Andrew Bardagjy, USN**

*POW on interrogation by Nazi SS recorded 2 December, 2008*

*"I found these people and they had on a German uniform with a gun. Of course we just threw our hands up ... and they didn't want us. I saw that Chetnik emblem on his cap and I said well, we're among friends."*

**Donald Landrum, USAAF**

*Shot down over Nazi territory recorded 17 April, 2008*

*"Well, being a Christian, it was bad to think about trying to kill someone, but if somebody's shooting at you, you know good and well you're going to shoot back ... and that way were doing a duty, we thought, to the country ..."*

**Roy Goad, U.S. Army**

*Awarded the Silver Star recorded 8 January, 2008*

*"I know one of the guys asked me one time ... was you ever scared? I said yeah, one time. I said I was scared from the time that first damn bomb hit, until the end of the war when I got home. That's just about the way it was ..."*

**Albert Kamenicky, USN**

*Pearl Harbor survivor recorded 2 December, 2008*



**Clovis and Mary Jo Thompson**

Chester Brown now resides in Conroe and Clovis Thompson in Abilene. The shared bond from their service keeps them in touch to this day as friends and fellow Marine veterans.

***If you know a veteran with a story to tell please have them call 1-800-252-VETS.***



## **TO VOICES OF VETERANS**

The Voices of Veterans oral history program accepts donations to ensure that every interview is transcribed and saved for posterity. The transcription process, which can be time consuming and expensive, allows historians and the interested general public to better study and review the interviews in our archives. A transcription, unlike the spoken word, affords the opportunity to read and review the interview in a more detailed manner and also allows searching by key words and terms. Voices of Veterans currently contracts with court reporters and transcribers in Texas to accomplish the laborious task of transcribing each interview. Your donation, of any amount, will help us reach our goal.

**DONATE ONLINE AT [VOICESOFVETERANS.ORG](http://VOICESOFVETERANS.ORG) OR MAIL TO  
Texas Veterans Land Board, P.O. Box 12873, Austin TX 78711-9788**



OPEN NOW THROUGH SEPTEMBER 4, 2012

EVERY VETERAN HAS  
A STORY TO TELL.



FREE  
EXHIBIT  
AT THE

CAPITOL  
VISITORS  
CENTER

112 East 11th Street  
Austin, Texas 78701  
512-305-8400

The Voices of Veterans™ oral history program is being highlighted in a yearlong multimedia exhibit at the Capitol Visitors Center in the historic Land Office Building on the Capitol grounds.

Entitled "Every Veteran Has a Story to Tell," this free exhibit features a short video on the program, multimedia iPad kiosks with actual selections from the veterans' interviews and personal artifacts.



Jerry Patterson, Chairman

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## I WANT TO TELL MY STORY.

In order to help us learn more about you and your service record, please complete this screening form to the best of your knowledge. Thank you.

(Mr. ) (Mrs.)

Your Name

(Mr. ) (Mrs.)

Spouse or Other Contact Name

Street Address

City

State

Zip Code

Home Phone

Cell Phone

Other Phone

FAX

Email address

Service Branch:

Last Rank:

to

Dates of Service (e.g., 1946 to 1951)

Conflict / Theater of Operations

Significant Battles / Missions

Awards/Medals

Significant Battles / Missions

Awards/Medals

Other Items of Interest

Please mail form to:  
Texas Veterans Land Board, P.O. Box 12873, Austin TX 78711-9788.  
Or you may fax it to 512-475-1415.  
Call 800-252-VETS (8387) for more info.